

On **Friday, February 15, 2013 from 13:15-14:30**, the Holy See and its co-sponsor the Pontifical Council for the Family will host a parallel event on the occasion of the Fifty-First Session of the Commission for Social Development entitled:

The Family, a Resource for Society

at the North Lawn Building of the United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room B.

The keynote speaker will be **His Excellency Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia**, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family of the Holy See, with presentations from **His Excellency Francis Chullikatt**, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, **H.E. Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser**, Former President of 66th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, **Rabbi Jeremy Rosen** and **Ms. Helen Alvare**, Associate Professor of Law, George Mason University.

The 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family is promoted by the Economic, Cultural and Social Council as “*an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development; take stock of recent trends in family policy development; share good practices in family policy making; review challenges faced by families worldwide and recommend solutions*”.

1. The Family – source of social capital and authentic heritage of humanity

Contemporary reflections on the wellbeing of society, less focused today than in the past on socio-economic factors, now take into account various multi-dimensional indicators, ranging from quality of life to quality of the environment. Social capital plays an important part in these reflections: understood as a network of extra-economic and extra-political relationships in which a person can experience and express mutual trust, social capital functions in accordance with norms of cooperation, reciprocity and solidarity. It is owing to this social fabric that political and economical processes are possible.

Studies identify the marriage-based family (namely: a father, mother and children) to be a natural resource for the social fabric of society, due not to any particular culture or given social system, but on account of the specific quality of its own intrinsic relational and interactional abilities. Whereas other forms of interrelationship are based upon negotiation and seek to achieve individual happiness and development – at the expense and exploitation of social capital, rather than sustaining or building such resources – the family is based on a philosophy of selfless giving, reciprocity and generosity inherent to the gift of fertility. For these reasons, the family should become once again the focal point of social and economic policies.

2. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to the Charter of the Rights of the Family (1983)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges that the family constitutes an environment that fosters the integrity, development and the dignity of every human being. Article 12 of the Declaration considers the family within the sphere of intimacy and privacy, which are crucial

for the protection of human freedom and dignity. Article 16 of the Declaration is entirely dedicated to the importance of the family, and recognizes that: “(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”

The Holy See published the Charter of the Rights of the Family in response to decreased regard for the family within policy making, and in reaffirmation of the importance of the family and its inalienable role. The Preamble reads: “The rights of the person, even though (...) expressed as rights of the individual, have a fundamental social dimension which finds an innate and vital expression in the family.” Therefore: “based on marriage, that intimate union of life in complementarity between a man and a woman which is constituted in the freely contracted and publicly expressed indissoluble bond of matrimony and is open to the transmission of life,” the family should be protected and promoted by society and by the State.

[All are invited to attend.]

More information about the work of the Holy See Mission is available at www.holyseemission.org, and the Pontifical Council for the Family at www.familia.va.

New York, 8 February, 2013